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STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS



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COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA 29201

CARROLL A. CAMPBELL, JR.
GOVERNOR

BILL J. SAMS
DIRECTOR

**PALMETTO
VETS GAZETTE**

VOL. 1 APRIL - MAY, 1989

"FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK"

Care of the disabled veteran has been an obligation of government throughout history. I am cognizant of the importance of the veterans programs in South Carolina. The goal of the South Carolina Department of Veterans Affairs and my goal is to maximize the services, assistance and advocacy for the veteran. We want the veterans to have the entitlements and benefits which are available to them as the result of Congressional actions, and we are more than anxious to "go to bat" for the veterans of our great State.

The aim of the Federal Department of Veterans Affairs is to pay veterans exactly what they ask for when they are entitled, and no more. The aim of the South Carolina Department of Veterans Affairs is to obtain for veterans all they are entitled to, to tell them when they are entitled, and to help them obtain and prepare the evidence which will prove their entitlement.

Many uninformed people are prone to use the words "duplication of effort" when referring to the work of a State Department of Veterans Affairs as compared to the Federal Department of Veterans Affairs. Nothing could be further from the truth. This is comparable to saying that a lawyer who represents clients and a court of law are performing the same function. The South Carolina Department of Veterans Affairs to a veteran seeking benefits from the Federal Department of Veterans Affairs can well be compared to a lawyer who represents a client in court.

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SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS NEWS

STATE DOCUMENTS

The major service organizations have announced the following dates and places for their State Conventions:

American EX-POW's	September 15-17, 1989	Spartanburg
American Legion	June 24-26, 1989	Greenville
AMVETS	June 10-11, 1989	Columbia
Disabled American Veterans	May 18-21, 1989	Sumter
Veterans of Foreign Wars	June 23-25, 1989	Columbia

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS NEWS

The Retirement of Mr. Hoyt B. Hill, Jr., on June 30, 1988, after more than forty-four years of dedicated service to his fellowman, created a significant void in the agency. On August 2, 1988, Governor Campbell appointed Mr. Bill J. Sams as Director to provide the leadership and guidance necessary to continue the quality work which has been the hallmark of the agency for many, many years under the direction of Mr. Hill.

To assist him in the task of leading the agency, Mr. Sams appointed Mr. Thomas E. Schmidt as Deputy Director on September 2, 1989. This appointment created a vacancy in the Field Office Supervisor position at the VA Regional Office. Mr. Sams appointed Mr. Jimmie L. Gresham to fill that position on October 2, 1988.

Pursuant to these appointments, came the task of finding a qualified individual to fill the Claims Representative vacancy created by Mr. Gresham's promotion. After a diligent search, Mr. Ben Owens, Jr., was hired on November 17, 1988.

On February 2, 1989, Mr. Vernon R. Scarbrough was hired for a newly authorized position at the Charleston VA Medical Center. In the past, service to the veterans at that hospital was accomplished through itinerant service on Tuesdays which was superbly performed by Mr. Robert A. Smith for many years.

Congratulations to the promotees and welcome aboard to our new personnel.

Anyone needing to contact the Agency Field Offices may do so by calling the following numbers:

VA Regional Office	765-5104	Jimmie L. Gresham
Columbia VA Medical Center	776-4000 X700	Lawrie H. Harmon
Augusta VA Medical Center	(404)823-2256	Richard T. Coleman
Charleston VA Medical Center	577-5011 X7506	Vernon R. Scarbrough

SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFIT ESTIMATE

Do you want to know how much you will receive in Social Security benefits when you retire? You can get the information now by calling (800) 937-2000 and asking for the new Personal Earnings and Benefit Estimate Statement. By filling out this form and providing your name, Social Security number, current earnings and an estimate of average future earnings, you can learn what your estimated Social Security check will be when you retire at age 62, 65 or 70.

The Social Security Administration will also give you a year-by-year breakdown of your earnings and estimates of survivor's and disability benefits. You should receive a response in three to six weeks.

Previously, you were only able to receive a yearly salary history for the past three years and a lump-sum report of all earnings before that period.

COUNTY VETERANS AFFAIRS OFFICERS NEWS

There have been several changes in the counties in the last few months.

Robert T. Eubanks, who had been the Union County Veterans Affairs Officer since 1977, passed away on November 3, 1988, after a long struggle with cancer. On December 13, 1988, Joseph R. West, the Berkeley County Veterans Affairs Officer since 1949, also lost his battle with cancer. Our heartfelt sympathy goes out to the families of both these fine gentlemen who served their community and nation with honor and dignity.

Mrs. Etta A. Jaillette of Florence County retired on December 31, 1988, after over thirty years of service to Florence County. We wish for Etta a happy and healthy retirement which is well deserved.

Replacing these fine County Veterans Affairs Officers will be difficult, but the County Delegations have found three well qualified individuals who have accepted the challenge. Mr. I. G. Vanderford was appointed the Union County Veterans Affairs Officer on January 3, 1989. Mr. Clarence McGee received his appointment for Berkeley County on January 17, 1989, and Ms. Maria Lewis was appointed on January 18, 1989, to serve the veterans of Florence County. We welcome each of these fine individuals and wish them all the best in their new endeavors.

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VETERANS ADMINISTRATION LIFE INSURANCE

The VA has established a toll-free number to assist veterans and their dependents with questions about government life insurance. Most insurance holders and beneficiaries can obtain immediate information on policy changes, dividends and other matters by dialing (800) 422-8079 from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. EDT. Callers whose records may not be readily available will receive a return call or written response.

VA officials also remind policyholders who continue to pay premiums and that they need not submit applications for dividends. Dividends are automatically paid to current policyholders, usually on the policy's anniversary date.

ELIGIBILITY FOR SERVICE-VETERANS INSURANCE (RH)—Veterans separated from service on or after April 25, 1951, who are granted a service-connected disability but are otherwise in good health may apply to the VA for up to \$10,000 life insurance coverage at standard insurance rates within one year from the date the VA notifies the veteran that the disability has been rated as service-connected.

NEW SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

It is fitting that this being the first edition of our newsletter, we include information on the new Secretary of Veterans Affairs. The cabinet position was created by Public Law 100-527 and is only the first step in the direction of improving service to the nation's veterans.

The new Department of Veterans Affairs' first Secretary is Edward J. Derwinski. He is a WWII Army infantry veteran, and served in the House from 1959 to 1983. He is credited with a major role in passing civil service, postal service and foreign aid reform laws.

After redistricting eliminated his Congressional Seat, he accepted a position as the State Department's chief trouble-shooter. In March 1987, he was named Undersecretary of State for Security Assistance, Science and Technology, which oversees U. S. military aid and weapons distribution to other countries.

His past congressional experience did not include significant involvement with veterans matters, but by virtue of being a former senior Congressman, the VA Secretary should have good relations with Congress. Even before his confirmation, Secretary Derwinski appealed to the Office of Management and Budget for changes in appropriations accounts covering medical care, general operating expenses and construction. This request dealt with both a supplemental appropriation for FY 1989 and the FY 1990 budget.

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